



Environmental Assessment
Right of Way Renewal for Overland Re-Supply Moves
2010

DOI-BLM-LLAK0100-2010-0043-EA

Preparing Office: Arctic Field Office

Project Title/Type of Action: Right of Way Renewal for Overland Re-Supply Moves

Case File Number: FF092921

Land Use Plans: NPR-A Oil and Gas Leasing EIS (1983), Utility Corridor Final EIS (1989), Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Recommendations Final Environmental Impact Statement (1998), Northeast NPR-A Supplemental IAP/EIS (2008), and 2004 Northwest NPR-A IAP/EIS (2004)

Applicant: Crowley Marine Services DBA CATCO

Address: 201 Arctic Slope Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99518

Date: January 6, 2010

Lands Involved: Throughout North Slope of Alaska, including NPR-A

GLOSSARY

ANILCA – The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act passed in 1980, modified and established designation of federal lands in Alaska for conservation and wilderness. These lands are managed by the National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and US Forest Service.

Executive Order 11888 – Signed May 1977 was issued in order to avoid, to the extent possible, the long and short-term impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative.

Executive Order 11990 – Signed May 1977 was issued for the protection of wetlands, and which directs federal agencies to “minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands, and enhance and preserve the natural and beneficial values of wetlands” when carrying out actions on federal lands.

FLPMA – The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 is a Public Law 94-579 passed by Congress October 21, 1976 that gave direction to the way in which the public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management are managed.

NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act. This law, passed in 1969, went into effect on January 1, 1970. It requires all Federal Agencies to disclose the environmental effects of their actions.

Environmental Assessment

Overland Moves on BLM Managed Lands on North Slope DOI-BLM-LLAK0100-2010-0043-EA

Chapter 1 Introduction

Crowley Marine Services of Anchorage Alaska has requested a five year renewal of a permit for overland moves on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the North Slope of Alaska. These include the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) and potentially the Central Arctic Management Area (CAMA) which are managed by BLM (See Map 1).

1.1 Need for Action

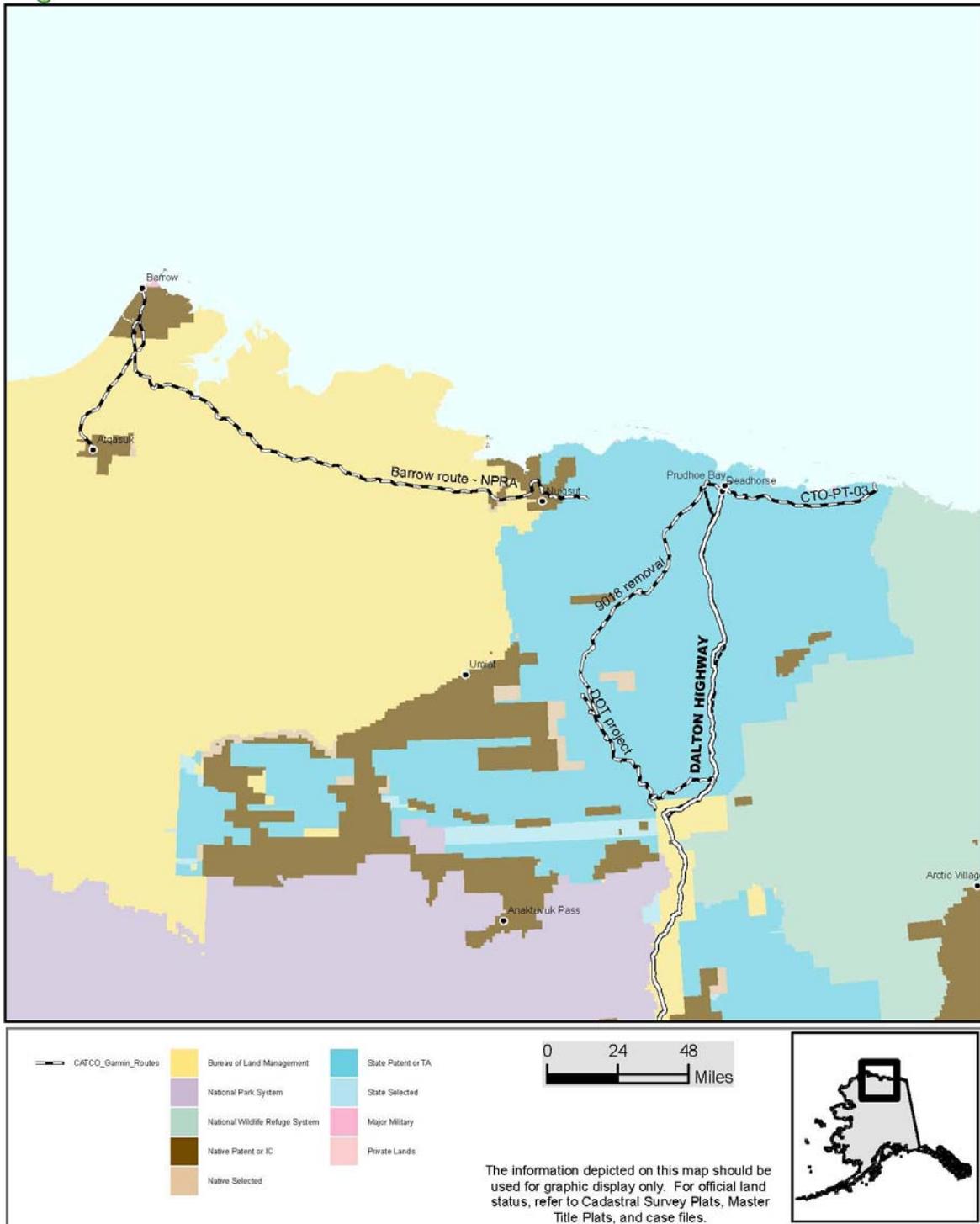
The need for the proposed action is for the BLM to allow the applicant access for continued logistical support to remote regions on the North Slope. Activities include re-supply and emergency services. Communities in the area, as well as government agencies and private operations, need access within NPR-A for re-supply. Overland moves provide commodities for communities on the North Slope. Overland tundra travel is recognized as an appropriate use of NPR-A lands. If these services were not allowed the cost for obtaining goods and services via aircraft would be much higher.

1.2 Purpose of Action

The objective of the proposed action is to allow the applicant a permit to have continued access to existing roads and trails in NPR-A, and outlying BLM lands. The ROW would provide the applicant with existing overland tundra transportation corridors and staging areas within the NPR-A and CAMA for five years.

1.3 Laws, regulations, other NEPA documentation that influence this EA.

This EA will be based on the findings, management controls, and protective measures of the original Environmental Assessment written for the project (EA, AK-020-0008-2000), The Utility Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement (UCFEIS) approved 9/27/1989, The Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Recommendations Final Environmental Impact Statement (CAMAWRFEIS), the 2008 Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, Supplemental Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (NE NPR-A IAP/EIS) and the 2004 Northwest National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (NW NPR-A IAP/EIS) as well as other laws and regulations. The action, as proposed, is consistent with the objectives outlined in these documents and not in conflict with other resources in the area. The proposed use is in conformance with current policy of the Arctic Field Office, BLM.



Map 1. BLM Lands on the North Slope and routes used for overland travel in 2010.

The proposed action is in conformance with the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (NPRPA), Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA), Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Endangered Species Act, Executive Order (EO) 11988, and EO 11990.

1.4 Decision to be made

The BLM must conduct a project-specific NEPA analysis and determine whether the proposed project should be approved, rejected, or approved with modifications, and if additional mitigation is needed. The scope of this EA includes analysis that enables the BLM to select among alternatives that meet the purpose and need, and are within the BLM's jurisdiction (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1506.1(a) (2)).

This EA has been prepared to meet requirements of NEPA, and to support U.S. Department of Interior (USDOI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decision-making on permits required to construct and implement the proposed project. The scope of this EA includes analysis of the effects of the proposed activity and alternatives.

Impacts of this type of activity have been evaluated in the referenced planning documents.

1.5 Scoping and Issues

Public notification of the Environmental analysis was announced in the NEPA register on file at the Arctic Field Office Environmental Assessment web site beginning 3 August 2010. No public comments or inquiries were received through 6 January 2011.

BLM guidelines include a list of issues that are addressed, where applicable, in NEPA documents (BLM, 2004, Appendix 1). Some elements are not present in the project area and are, therefore, not discussed further. A summary listing of related issues considered by AFO Field Staff is provided in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Issues Considered in Evaluating Impacts

Resources/Environmental Considerations for Issues and Analysis	Determination	Basis of Determination (See Note)
Air Quality	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: State of Alaska Air Non-Point and Mobile Program and regulations (18 AAC 50); and Permit Stipulations II., VI. A, VI. B, and X.
Cultural and Paleontological Resources	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, & Stipulation V
Subsistence	Minimally	Protection provided by Alaska National Interest

	Impacted	Lands Conservation Act; Stipulation IX-A.
Environmental Justice	Not Present	
Waste (Hazardous/Solid)	Minimally Impacted	Protections provided by State of Alaska 18 AAC 30, 60, 62, 63, 72, and 75; Stipulation XI
Water Resources	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Stipulation II, VIII, XI
Threatened & Endangered Species: Spectacled and Steller's eiders	Not Present	Protection provided by section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Project specific stipulation 5, Non oil and Gas Permit Stipulations X A and B.
Threatened & Endangered Species: Polar Bear	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by the following. Letter of Authorization for the Incidental and Intentional Take of polar bears issued under sections 101 (a)(4)(A)(c), 109(h) and 112(c) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA), issuance of these LOAs also fulfills the requirements for Tier 2 Consultation of the Programmatic Biological Opinion. Project specific stipulations 3 and 6. Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations XI A and B and XII A and B.
Fish	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations II.A.-II.F., VII.A. and B., X.C, XII, EFH Assessment, and State of Alaska Fish Habitat (Title 16) Permits.
non-T&E birds	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Project Specific Stipulation 5, Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations E, X A and B, XI B, XII A and B.
non-T&E mammals	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations X.B.1, XI.A, B and C, and Permit Specific Stipulation 6.
Vegetation	Minimally Impacted	Protection provided by Non Oil and Gas Permit Stipulations III.C, IX.A and B, and Permit Specific Stipulation 5.
Invasive, Non-native Species	Not Present	
Recreation	Minimally Impacted	Protection Provided by Stipulations III, IV, VIII, X and XI.
Visual Resource Management	Minimally Impacted	Protection Provided by Stipulations III, IV, VIII, X and XI.
Wild & Scenic Rivers	Not Present	
Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands	Potentially Impacted	See Chapters 3 and 4. Protection Provided by Stipulations III, IV, VIII, X and XI.

<p>Notes:</p> <p>1. Determination tiered from: and laws and regulations as noted.</p>
<p>Key to Table 1.1: EFH – Essential Fish Habitat Potentially Affected: The proposed action or alternative could result in potential impacts to resource or issues to the level that additional mitigation may be required, or there is a need to evaluate potentially significant issues. Minimally Impacted: Resources or issues would not be affected to a degree requiring further analysis because either the expected impacts from the proposed action and alternative would be minimal, or standard protections (e.g., ROPs and Stipulations from overriding BLM plans or other legal protections) would reduce impacts. Minimally impacted resources or issues will not be analyzed further in this EA. Not Present: Resources or issues are not expected to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives because activities would occur at a different time or place. Resource or issues not present will not be analyzed further in the EA.</p>

In summary, BLM resource specialists have identified the following issue for further evaluation in this EA: Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands

Chapter 2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the alternatives (proposed action and no action) and compares the alternatives in terms of their environmental impacts (Section 1.5) and their achievement of objectives (Section 1.2).

2.2 Description of Alternatives

2.2.1 Alternative A: No Action

Under the no action alternative permitted access for the applicant to conduct overland winter tundra travel throughout the NPR-A and CAMA, as identified in this EA, would not be renewed. By not renewing this permit, the applicant would not be authorized to provide winter overland tundra transportation and staging services within the Northeast and Northwest NPR-A planning areas. Any re-supply to communities would be by aircraft. The no action alternative is inconsistent with the existing management policy of the Fairbanks District Office, but its analysis is required by NEPA

2.2.2 Alternative B: Proposed Action

The proposed action would be to renew the application for access of overland re-supply to Native villages on the North Slope, including lands in NPR-A and CAMA (See Map 1 for 2010 example). Such overland moves provide transportation of fuel, equipment, and supplies from Barrow to Nuiqsut and Atkasuk. Other routes may be established and used, as needed. Sea ice may be used as a travel route from Prudhoe Bay to Barrow. Water sources may include lakes close to the ROW, but cannot be identified at this time since specific projects that will be

conducted under this permit are currently undetermined. The permit would be for five years, through 15 May 2015.

Travel routes follow staked and unstaked trails, and vehicles used would include low-ground pressure vehicles such as rolligons or trackmasters, or tracked vehicles such as bulldozers. The timing of use of the travel routes during spring or fall is determined by freeze up and snow conditions. Trails would be established and maintained by compaction of snow with the heavy vehicles. The frequency of and length of trips depends on demand and varies from year to year. For example, in 2010 the Nuiqsut to Barrow route (171 miles) and Barrow to Atqasuk were used; while approximately 362 acres of trail were used in 2006-07, and 840 acres in 2007-08.

Chapter 3 Affected Environment

The affected environment for the area of the Proposed Action is discussed in the following documents: the Oil and Gas Leasing in the NPR-A FEIS (1983), Utility Corridor RMP/EIS (1991), NW NPRA IAP/EIS (2003), and NE NPRA IAP/EIS (2008).

3.1 Issue 1 Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands

The NPR-A was evaluated for wilderness characteristics in Section 105(c) studies during 1977 and 1978. Although activities such oil and gas leasing, subsistence practices, overland moves, excavation, recreation, aircraft use, site clean-ups, and scientific research or monitoring continue in NPR-A, most of the area remains in a natural state as it was during that study. Residents of the area do occupy seasonal dwellings or fish camps and people travel extensively by motorized vehicle over parts of NPR-A, but there are no roads outside the established communities. The overall character of NPR-A (excluding private lands) remains natural with few obvious signs of modern human influence or presence. A visitor to the area or an inhabitant from the settlements in or near the NPR-A can easily find opportunities for solitude (USDOI, BLM, 1978). Some areas within NPR-A contain excellent ecological, geological, scientific, educational, scenic, and historical values.

Chapter 4 Environmental Consequences

The analyses in this EA are based on experience, observations, and studies from decades of similar operations on the North Slope. This section provides the evaluation of direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed action and no action alternatives. Similar types of impacts to the proposed action have been analyzed and discussed in the following documents: the Oil and Gas Leasing in the NPR-A FEIS (1983), Utility Corridor RMP/EIS (1991), NW NPR-A IAP/EIS (2003), and NE NPRA- IAP/EIS (2008).

4.1 Direct and Indirect Effects

Issues specifically identified in Section 1.5 for further analysis in this EA are discussed below. The affects of the proposed action would be short term and localized.

4.1.1 Issue 1 Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands

Activities associated with the proposed action, including use of temporary structures, vehicles (e.g., Rolligons or low pressure ground vehicles), noise from generators, aircraft, human presence, and associated activity all would have some minimal short-term impact on solitude, or naturalness. These adverse, short-term impacts would be confined primarily to the activity sites (travel routes, camps, etc.) and view shed (i.e., approximately ½ mi in any direction from the sites).

A longer lasting impact from overland moves could occur from "green trails." In addition to the short-term impacts that would result from overland moves a seasonal visual concern could result from greening of vegetation from travel routes. This greening of the vegetation does not necessarily develop wherever ice pads are constructed or snow is compacted but when it does, it can be detectable from the air for 2 to 5 years.

The impacts from the proposed action would have minor to negligible impacts, within a relatively small area, given the size of NPR-A. In addition, activities such as winter overland moves and transport of materials have occurred for decades in NPR-A, and are considered as typical winter activities and consistent the current management of these lands. Moreover, these types of activities are consistent with the current laws and regulations, in particular the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (NPRPA). Measures to protect the characteristics of these lands, including Stipulations III, IV, VIII, X and X. are described in Section 4.3 Mitigation and Monitoring.

4.1.1.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative the ROW would not be granted and overland moves by the proponent would not be allowed. There would be no impact to wilderness characteristics or wild lands. Aircraft use would increase, and there could be higher noise levels in areas near the landing fields. Such impacts would be short term and localized.

4.2 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative impacts result from the incremental addition of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Each action may be individually minor by itself, but when added to others could become significant over a period of time.

The time frame for the proposed action for the project area is 1977 (designation of NPR-A) to 10 years into the future, assuming that the relatively low level of activity and management would remain at about the same level as present. Due to the limited scope and intensity of the proposed action the geographic area would be limited within 10 miles of the proposed use areas.

Additional past, present, and future activities in the area include recreation, subsistence, and research and monitoring. While the level of such activities may increase slightly within the next 10 years, there are no development proposals that would substantially add to the current levels.

The incremental addition of the proposed action would be short-term and highly localized and would not add to increased cumulative effects.

The proposed action is not anticipated to result in cumulative impacts due to the remoteness of the portion of the area where the activity would occur, the low impact levels associated with the activity.

4.2.1 Issue 1 Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands

Impacts from temporary trails and disturbance from noise and other activities would be short term, localized, and not accumulate.

4.3 Mitigation and Monitoring

The stipulations (Appendix A) for the proposed action are a subset of the Arctic Field Office Non Oil & Gas Permit Stipulations along with project specific stipulations related to issues presented

4.4 Residual Impacts

The potential issue that identified in the evaluation of the proposed action for this EA was Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands. The analysis found that impacts would be short term and localized and that mitigation measures in Appendix A would adequately reduce any adverse effects to Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands in the area. Likewise, the analysis also found that mitigation measures would adequately reduce any adverse effects to Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands which would also be short term and localized. The proposed action would not contribute to significant cumulative effects to Wilderness Characteristics and Wild Lands in the proposed project areas.

Chapter 5 Consultation and Coordination

5.1 Agencies, Organization, Persons Consulted

Public notification of the Environmental analysis will be on file at the Arctic Field Office and available on the Arctic Field Office Environmental Assessment web site.

5.2 List of Preparers

Dave Yokel, Wildlife Biologist
Michael Kunz, Archaeologist
Susan Flora, Environmental Scientist
Mike Worley, Realty Specialist
Richard Kemnitz, Hydrologist
Donna Wixon, Natural Resource Specialist
Debbie Nigro, Wildlife Biologist
Matthew Whitman, Fish Biologist
Stacie McIntosh, Anthropologist/Subsistence Specialist
Roger Sayre, NEPA Specialist

Bibliography

USDOI, BLM. 1978. NPR-A 105c Investigations. Anchorage, AK: USDOI, BLM.

ANILCA Requirements

Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation: FINDING: This proposed action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses. No reasonably foreseeable and significant decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources or in the distribution of harvestable resources, and no reasonably foreseeable limitations on harvester access will result from the proposed action.

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Finding of No Significant Impact

Type of Action: Right of Way Renewal for Overland Re-Supply Moves

Serial Number: FF092921

Environmental Assessment Number: DOI-BLM-LLAKF010-2010-0043-EA

Applicant: Crowley Marine Services DBA CATCO

Address: 201 Arctic Slope Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

District: Arctic Field Office

Planning Unit: NPR-A Oil and Gas Leasing EIS (1983), Utility Corridor Final EIS (1989), Central Arctic Management Area Wilderness Recommendations Final Environmental Impact Statement (1998), Northeast NPR-A Supplemental IAP/EIS (2008), and 2004 Northwest NPR-A IAP/EIS (2004)
The National Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976

Lands Involved: Throughout North Slope of Alaska, including NPR-A

Context and Intensity of Environmental Impacts

Based upon a review of the EA prepared by the Arctic Field Office and the supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. We reviewed the context of the proposed action and found that it would not result in any significant effects to resources and values. The mitigation measures and environmental protections would ensure that the Proposed Action would not add significantly to incremental impacts.

The need for this project is to allow CATCO access for continued logistical support to remote regions on the North Slope.

The following factors were considered in the EA to evaluate the significance of this proposal (40 CFR 1508.27): Beneficial and adverse impacts; effects on public health and safety; unique cultural or ecological areas within or near the project area: potentially controversial or uncertain effects; whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effect; cumulative effects; adverse impacts to important scientific, cultural or historical resources; effects to endangered or threatened species or habitat; or whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, local or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements:

Monitoring and Mitigation

BLM will monitor on the ground activities periodically. Mitigation measures will be implemented as described in the attached authorization stipulations.

APPROVED:

/s/Lon Kelly
Arctic Field Office Manager

January 6, 2011

Date